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ABSTRACT

Objectives of the ongoing Continuing Professional Development for Local Education Authority (LEA) project in the United Kingdom are to enhance the skills of LEA staff by defining the future education curriculum, exploring definitions of quality, developing a program of continuing professional development (CPD) for curriculum managers at the LEA level, structuring the CPD in modular form, and designing a competency-based CPD profile and seeking accreditation for each module. To date the project steering group has (1) conducted a survey of 52 LEAs and 6 training agencies using questionnaires, structured telephone interviews, and extended face-to-face interviews to collect data that will be used to design a CPD competency-based profile and develop sample CPD modules; (2) conducted a needs analysis using the DACUM (Developing a Curriculum) method to develop a list of competency statements of current and predicted LEA functions; and (3) developed a preliminary description of the functions of an LEA based on the finding of the DACUM exercise and the survey. Findings so far indicate that many of the skills and behavior patterns of management are highly complex and that the project team needs to decide whether to look for basic principles only, or whether some detailed analysis is necessary in determining and meeting management staff training needs. Until that decision is made, and as project work progresses, fundamental training needs of LEA advisors are being identified, and short training modules are being developed to try to address them. (NLL)

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Bulletin No. 1

Staff development provision in further education has focused on needs at college level, with not even a passing reference to needs at LEA level. With the increasing curriculum management responsibilities under NAFE planning, and now the Education Reform Act, it is both feasible and timely to begin the process of enhancing some of the most fundamental skills of LEA advisers and officers as a matter of urgency.

The FEU project, 'Continuing Professional Development for LEA Advisers and Officers' (RP528), is using the FEU curriculum development model to explore the needs of further education teams in LEAs and to develop a modular curriculum which allows for prior experience.

This bulletin is intended to report on progress so far, and to establish links with a wider LEA and college audience than has been possible in the early stages of the work. It is anticipated that further bulletins will report on subsequent stages of the project.

Continuing Professional Development for LEA Staff

Introduction

The aim of the project is to offer support to Local Education Authority (LEA) staff in post-16 curriculum management in the context of the changing relationship between LEAs and their colleges, by:

- defining the further education curriculum;
- exploring definitions of quality;
- developing a programme of continuing professional development (CPD) for curriculum managers at LEA level;
- structuring the CPD in a modular form to accommodate:
  —prior learning/experiences,
  —review and update of content,
  —flexible modes of delivery,
  —compatibility with other CPD programmes;
- designing a competence-based CPD profile and seeking accreditation for each module.

The work carried out by the steering group and the consultant form the basis of this bulletin, and falls into the following activities:

- a survey of LEAs using questionnaires, structured telephone interviews, and extended face-to-face interviews;

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- a needs analy sis exercise based on the DACUM (Developing a Curriculum) method;
- a preliminary description of the functions of an LEA, based on the findings of the survey and the DACUM exercise.

The survey of LEAs sought:

- to identify the number of staff currently holding a brief for curriculum management post-16 in LEAs;
- to identify LEA proposals to develop curriculum expertise in the post-16 sector in the context of strategic planning;
- to map current CPD activities in the area of curriculum management by LEAs;

On the basis of the survey, the project will:

- design a CPD competence-based profile;
- develop sample CPD modules.

Preliminary work has provided evidence of much energy and initiative, but an even greater number of anxieties and issues are still to be addressed. This bulletin outlines these issues and offers some steps to begin to deal with them. It is hoped that this will open up a wider debate and enable often isolated individuals and authorities an opportunity to share thinking and begin to carry through solutions relevant to their own circumstances.

The survey

Questionnaires

The survey was carried out in August 1988. Of the 112 LEAs in the UK, 52 responded, of which 19 did not employ further education advisers/inspectors.

The combination of custom and practice and workload continues to prevent schools advisers/inspectors from involvement in further education where this would be helpful and beneficial. Our survey also revealed a significant proportion of LEAs which were either carrying out or intending to carry out reviews of the entire adviser/inspector service.

Visits

Between February and April 1989, a series of extended face-to-face interviews and shorter, structured telephone interviews took place. Twenty LEAs and six training agencies involved with professional development were involved. These interviews were designed as a supplement to the questionnaire survey. They were discursive in nature and did not attempt to provide a detailed needs analysis.

Discussions covered the following areas:

- Implementation of the Education Reform Act (ERA), in particular:
  —work undertaken to describe the functions of the LEA,
  —role analysis within strategic planning,
  —schemes of delegation,
  —resource allocation,
  —performance indicators;
- existing strategies for non-advanced further education (NAFE) planning, including monitoring and evaluation;
- integration of curriculum initiatives such as the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI), National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), and A/S levels;
- LEA response to falling rolls;
- recent, current and planned staff development for LEA staff.

Discussions were wide ranging, focusing on issues of particular significance for the individual and/or the organisation.

The issues

The following summary emphasises the main concerns of the LEAs which have taken part in our enquiries, during which we have concentrated on identifying good practice and demonstrating the significance of the LEA role in ensuring quality education and training in further education.

Staffing

In LEAs serving the same sized populations, the further education management teams can consist of as many as three officers and three advisers or as few as one full-time post and a secondment guaranteed for 12 months.

There is general recognition that sound evaluation techniques can lead to higher quality provision. Work continues to be done on describing the appropriate levels and experiences of staff necessary to carry out the evaluation at LEA level. By and large, LEAs continue to act as administrators of further education while trying to identify and adopt appropriate management roles, and all staff are overworked. Roles and functions are often unclear.

Management

The move from administration to management of the further education system at LEA level is hindered by a lack of clarity about the role and the functions required under ERA.

Often, the most developed sense of team work in an authority is seen in the further education section, although the lines of responsibility of officer/adviser/inspector can be confused. Links between teams, such as those working on TVEI or tertiary re-organisation, are not always clear.

Collaboration with and between college principals has strengthened under NAFE planning, but again, role allocation and functions have yet to be fully explored.

Concepts of organisational development and the LEA's role in relation to its colleges remains inadequately explored. Course teams and individual staff do not always receive the support from LEA and college management that they require.

Organisational and institutional cultures do not always appear to have either the curriculum or the learner at their centre. An often-expressed concern by many authorities is that the LEA role in monitoring and evaluation might be perceived (or reduced to) largely one involving the threat of sanctions. This could provoke defensive responses from colleges and individual members of staff which would drive a wedge between the authority and its college/s.

Policy

LEAs are recognising the need to develop curriculum planning statements in order to make sense of models of resourcing. Often these statements are general and a definition of 'the product' (structured student learning) policy and practice on quality assurance are underdeveloped. ERA requires authorities to be clear about what is to be delegated to colleges, but LEAs remain unclear about their own purpose. There is a tendency to avoid contentious local issues such as post-16 co-ordination, taking into consideration, for example, sizes of sixth form groups and the potential for schools to apply for grant-maintained status.

In spite of the consultation required under NAFE planning, the profile of further education in local government continues to be low. The level of interest in and understanding of further education among elected members and pre-16 LEA staff, including schools advisers and careers staff, is often disappointing. ERA, particularly those aspects concerned with the national curriculum and grant maintained status, has ensured the continuing dominance of pre-16 education in local discussion.

Planning

FEU research project RP311, 'Curriculum Impact of Work-Related Non-Advanced Further Education', provides patterns of evolving NAFE planning procedures which usefully form a basis for strategic planning under ERA, though, in many authorities, not all these procedures are yet formalised at local level. For example, corporate planning involving college management teams and LEA staff are often in the developmental stage rather than an integral part of local decision making.

Strategic planning teams can simply mean that further education officers talk to careers and youth service officers. At best, the further education 'team' is an integration of officer, adviser, youth and careers officers, with clear links into all areas of local authority planning.

Generally, however, the value of contributions from further education sections to other local authority departments, such as economic development units and social services, and from there to authority-wide development planning, is often overlooked.

In some authorities, draft schemes of delegation were devised by people with little knowledge and experience of curriculum management. They were more likely to be competent in the area of finance. In some cases, such as staff from treasurer departments, not only was curriculum

management not part of their experience, but neither was further education.

It has since been recognised by many authorities that resource allocation models which are not curriculum led can be beset by problems, often stemming from historical budget allocations between either colleges or sectors within colleges.

Monitoring and evaluation

Most LEAs express confidence in their ability to monitor post-16 provision in colleges. A variety of statistical instruments are in place and computer-aided management information systems (CMIS) are expected to produce the required quantitative data. However, in many cases, CMIS has yet to meet these expectations.

Evaluation at the point of learning (classroom/workshop) takes place in some cases but, with too few further education advisers/inspectors in the system, LEAs' ability to carry out this function is raising serious resource/competence issues.

Quality in the curriculum

The current debate tends to focus on the monitoring of efficiency and economy. Educational effectiveness, requiring judgement about the quality of learning experiences, needs to be the starting-point. LEAs will want to create a quality consciousness that permeates the whole service, and consideration of how this might be achieved needs to be central in developing LEA structures and roles.

Market forces

There continues to be concern about the extent to which the labour market knows what it wants or needs in terms of workers, and its ability to plan effectively, or indeed its ability to provide accurate data. How good can Labour Market Information (LMI) be? How do the apparent needs of college travel-to-work areas coincide with, contribute to, contradict or clash with needs expressed in terms of LEA boundaries and, to an even greater extent, in regional terms? How do national and regional labour needs fit a college with clearly articulated local labour needs—for example, high cost specialist courses (e.g. iron foundry work) or vocational courses with relatively small but widely dispersed employment opportunities (e.g. fashion design)? How will the Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) respond to these concerns?

Staff training

The Local Education Authority Training Grants Scheme (LEATGS) and its predecessors provided LEAs with a central role in identifying need, determining priorities, producing plans, and implementing and evaluating In-Service Education of Teachers (INSET). In practice, a rehearsal for ERA. What lessons can be learnt from the experiences of LEAs in this area? How has staff development underpinned curricular developments and initiatives and enhanced the overall learning experiences of people? How has training for LEA staff been resourced? To what extent have LEAs devolved these responsibilities to colleges and lost an opportunity to enhance the LEA strategic planning role in NAFE?

Summary

The questionnaire and visits suggest:

- understaffing at LEA level;
- lack of clarity about LEA functions;
- inadequate integration of further education in the LEA strategic planning processes;
- confused roles and lines of responsibility;
- curriculum policies only just beginning to emerge;
- low political interest in further education;
- curriculum planning at an early stage of development;
- schemes of delegation dominated by historical budgets;
- CMIS gradually becoming more effective;
- patchy evaluation procedures;
- embryonic quality control/assurance;
- concern about quality of market research findings;
- lack of staff training.

Needs analysis

A set of officer/adviser competences was produced via the DACUM process used with members of the steering group. The statements produced were numerous and left out subject-related tasks such as TVEI, TECs and the National Curriculum. It was an initial attempt, recognised by the group as not totally reliable but nevertheless a

useful starter. Although the DACUM process has worked well in many situations, there is doubt about its suitability as a tool in the analysis of highly complex roles.

The statements fall into the following main categories:

- public relations;
- inspections;
- staff development;
- evaluation;
- personal and professional development;
- policy development;
- planning;
- administration;
- organisational development;
- physical resource management;
- curriculum management;
- human resource management;
- governance;
- communications management.

A detailed list of the statements is available.

Functions

The DACUM statements were arranged as a set of current and predicted LEA functions, and not adviser/officer roles. Working with those statements, the group considered theoretical work carried out by John Brenchley on the functions of an LEA *(Post-16 Inspection and Advisory Services after ERA* (to be published by FESC)). A revised set of those functions was identified as:

- negotiate and develop criteria and indices against which institutional performance can be judged;
- contribute to the development, monitoring and modification of resource allocation formulae;
- contribute to local economic development and strategic planning;
- promote institutional self-monitoring systems, samples and data, and identify management issues implied by them;
- assemble evidence and make judgements on the efficiency of resource management in an institution;
- contribute to the development of institutional self-evaluation instruments and sample their findings;
- combine statistical data and personal observation in a profile of institutional performance;
- conduct inspection in various forms;
- use evidence gained from various sources to stimulate better teaching and learning, through personal support, wherever necessary;
- promote, monitor, evaluate and contribute to the modification of equal opportunities practice;
- undertake planning of vocational education and training and monitoring of programmes;
- stimulate planned curriculum development, including core/entitlement curricula, in relation to future social and economic demands;
- initiate, negotiate and, where necessary, manage and integrate projects into mainstream activity, including externally funded and grant-aided schemes, and research and development projects;
- act as a line manager to advisory and project staff (The only projects LEAs should be running in future are those underpinning strategic planning.);
- plan in-service training schemes, needs identification, budget allocation, delivery monitoring and evaluation;
- act as a consultant and adviser on management practice to senior staff;
- train LEA staff in the financial and personnel aspects of curriculum management;
- contribute to the induction training and appraisal of LEA staff on an agreed basis;
- inform, train and liaise with governors, parents and other community groups and agencies;
- relate the effectiveness of provision to the allocation and deployment of resources;
- issue reports on intra- and inter-institutional performance.

This list is presently being analysed by the consultant to the project, and competences being drawn from it. A parallel approach will be adopted, using a list of curriculum management tasks from which to devise

competences. The products of these separate processes and the DACUM approach will be collated. Such a list of competences could then be used as a measure for needs analysis and the development of training modules. FEU would be pleased to receive copies of needs analysis instruments developed in individual LEAs, together with examples of the results of their use in practice.

Many of the skills and behaviour patterns of management are highly complex. The project team needs to decide whether to look for basic principles only, or whether some detailed analysis is necessary in determining and meeting management staff training needs.

The next stage

Training modules

As the work described above progresses, particular training needs are identified. The steering group is consequently developing short training modules to try to address these needs. Authorities interested in piloting/developing work in this area should contact FEU. It will not be possible to develop comprehensive training programmes before the analysis of the functions and duties of an LEA can be completed, but it is both feasible and timely to begin the process of enhancing some of the fundamental skills of LEA advisers and officers as a matter of urgency.

National conference

One small steering group cannot hope to keep abreast of all the work currently taking place across England and Wales. Consequently, a conference will be held at the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) on Thursday 13 July 1989. It is intended that the preliminary results of the project will be presented and that through a sharing of views on CPD needs, a wider range of colleagues will help to shape the future work of the project.

FEU is interested in receiving:

- **comments on this bulletin and the work of this project;**
- **information or evidence from LEAs about their own work in this area;**
- **offers from LEAs to take part in the testing of pilot training modules for LEA advisers/officers.**

The FEU contact in all these matters is Lindsay Neil (Tel. 01-321 0433 ext. 238)

For details of the availability of further copies of this bulletin and other FEU publications, please contact the Information Office, FEU, 2 Orange Street, London WC2H 7WE (tel. ext. 256).

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